



Determined to make it home



Xu Maomao's eccentric but pure art



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By Huang Daohen

The nation's great migration is once again underway.

As many as 3.4 billion passenger trips are expected during the 30-day Spring Festival travel rush, which began in late January. The yearly event is the largest seasonal human migration on the planet.

People outside of China often wonder, why the rush? Is it that important to get home on time?

Beijing Today interviewed college students, migrants and officer workers in Beijing who are searching for a way home. The reason for the struggle is clear: everyone wants to be part of a family reunion dinner, visits to relatives and the exchange of red envelopes.

And don't forget the firecrackers!

Read more on Pages 3-5

Investors bullish about future despite troubles

By Zhao Hongyi

Chinese companies operating in the EU are planning to step up their investments to snatch up technology, brands and expertise, according to "Chinese Outbound Investment in the European Union," a survey published by the EU Chamber of Commerce in China.

The Chamber released the survey in cooperation with KPMG and RolandBerger Strategy Consultants.

The EU is perceived by Chinese investors as a stable environment with advanced technology, skilled labor and a transparent legal environment, the survey said.

In addition, it is seen as a market welcoming foreign investment, with few barriers and little history of opposition to Chinese investment on the grounds of national security.

The European operating environment is not, however, regarded as particularly easy to navigate, with the majority of respondents reporting operational obstacles.

The major impediments identified include difficulties in obtaining visas and work permits for Chinese employees and problems dealing with European labor laws.

Understanding the EU market is also a key concern,



David Cucino at the press conference Photo by Zhao Hongyi

due to the lack of uniform legislation in the 27 member states and 23 official languages.

Recommendations made by Chinese enterprises to European policy makers focus on these operational issues, with few making recommendations related to market access in the EU.

The three partners began the survey of 74 Chinese companies that have invested in the EU last August by anonymous questionings and face to face interviews.

Some 97 percent of the Chinese companies said they were planning more investments in the EU, even though 78 percent reported encountering operational difficulties related to bureaucracy and high costs.

Another 48 percent report encountering regulatory approval obstacles, mostly at the local level, and 85 percent said they were in Europe to sell their goods and services in the EU.

Chinese overseas direct investment was \$64 billion in 2011 and \$77 billion in 2012, according to UNCTAD.

It is expected to increase at an annual rate of 17 percent until 2015.

By then, Chinese annual Overseas Direct Investment (ODI) will reach \$150 billion, according to an estimate by the Ministry of Commerce.

But Chinese investment in Europe remains small, with many companies focused on selling their products and services, gaining expertise and technology and polishing

their brands.

Investment from EU countries accounts for 20 percent of all the investment China receives, while Chinese investment amounts to only 1.4 percent of all investment in the EU.

Most of the Chinese companies investing in the EU are looking for tax incentives or relaxed visa and work permit restrictions.

The 74 Chinese companies surveyed had completed at least one investment within the EU, it said.

Roughly two-thirds were state-owned and a third were private.

"Chinese investment in the EU is a positive trend, and this survey shows that Chinese companies are facing few regulatory market access

barriers," said David Cucino, president of the European Chamber in China.

Cucino said his chamber will sign a new agreement with the Ministry of Commerce to better protect investment, but did not mention what this agreement entailed.

"We can see from the survey that Chinese companies are confident about their future in Europe and intend to increase their presence," said Thomas Rodemer, a partner of KPMG.

"This demonstrates that it is a top priority for Chinese companies to invest in the EU, as well as a true operational challenge," said Charle Edouard-Bouée, president of RolandBerger Strategy Consultants Asia.

Western Union leads drive to donate 31,000 books across the nation

By Chen Nan

Western Union is rallying supporters to stock libraries in China's 31 provinces

On January 29, Western Union Company, in collaboration with the China Youth Development Foundation, called on the international Chinese community to join its New Year's drive to donate 1,000 books to each province.

The company pledged to make a gift to the China Youth Development Foundation for each transaction sent from one of 21 countries to China during the promotional period.

The company will also donate money for every "Like" of the post about the campaign on Facebook and every "retweet" of its



Drina Yue (left) and Yang Chunlei

Photo provided by Western Union

announcement on Twitter. The program enables consumers to promote education

for children in need, by using or "Liking" Western Union.

Each transaction or

social media advertisement will result in a donation of \$0.25 (1.56 yuan). The maximum donation resulting from all transactions and social network posts between January 28 and February 10 will be \$50,220.

This campaign is part of Western Union's Education for Better program, a three-year commitment to advance global education goals.

"Western Union's analysis shows more gifts are given at Chinese New Year than during any festive or seasonal holiday around the world," said Drina Yue, managing director and senior vice president of Western Union Asia-Pacific.

"As Chinese New Year

is coming, using Western Union wants to create an opportunity to bring good fortune to the young."

Yue said the most valuable gift is knowledge.

The company's analysis also showed that cash remains the preferable gift given during Chinese New Year and represents devotion and respect for one's elders and good fortune for the future.

Yang Chunlei, deputy secretary general of the China Youth Development Foundation, said it was delightful to see that Western Union was bringing together people from all around the world to give the gift of knowledge to young people and prepare them for a better future.

Graduates

Homecoming a reminder of job crunch

By Chen Nan

2013 may be the toughest year yet for job-seeking college graduates.

An expected 7 million fresh graduates will join the millions of older job seekers who failed to find employment during the last year, Xinhua reported.

Many are preparing to face a life-changing dilemma: the decision between staying at college or hunting for a job before taking the train back to their hometowns.

Graduates are anxious about their employment prospects.

CFP Photo

Fighting anxiety

College graduates constitute the majority of the country's workforce in state-owned, private and foreign companies.

But statistics released by the government are less hopeful when seen against a backdrop of a slowing economy and falling domestic demand.

For Ding Luo, 22, a senior at Minzu University of China, the future is not optimistic. Ding will face an unprecedentedly difficult battle to find a job after graduation.

Like most students who majored in administrative management, she signed up for the central government's annual employee exam in November, when more than 2 million applicants met to compete for 20,839 jobs.

The exam lasted a full day and included an administrative proficiency test with more than 100 multiple choice questions and a writing test.

The central government's employee exam was not only exam she sat. In December, she took an exam held by Industrial and Commercial Bank of China and Bank of China.

Ding's goal was to find a job at the Beijing office of one of the Big Four state-owned companies.

She chose a state-owned enterprise rather than a foreign one because it carries the chance of gaining a Beijing residency permit, as well as relatively regular work hours, she said.

Salary was not the main concern. "I can rely on my parents, both of whom have jobs with adequate salaries."

She thought she could earn at least 3,000 yuan with her bachelor degree, "but after months of job hunting I found I had to lower my expectations," Ding said.

While waiting for more interviews, she signed up for her university's graduate school exam.

To be accepted by the graduate school, Ding will be competing with 1.8 million students: 150,000 more than last year.

"In such a gloomy market, having a job is the most important thing; but if I am admitted to graduate school, I delay the crisis for three years," Ding said.

One-third of the exam candidates will be admitted to graduate school. The competition could have been even more intense if fewer university graduates had chosen to study abroad.

"Only getting a job or getting admitted to graduate school will relieve my anxiety," Ding said.

She never thought about going home for Spring Festival until the seasonal marketing boom left her feeling homesick.

Long way home

Buying a train ticket during the peak travel season is no easy feat. But as a student, Ding has an advantage.

Students are entitled to dis-

counted tickets for ordinary or high-speed trains during the Spring Festival rush.

College students have a longer winter holiday than working people, so generally their travel schedules are more flexible. They can also purchase the tickets before others, and this year they can buy them online.

That's helped million of students win a ticket home.

Ding bought her ticket back to Shaanxi Province for 150 yuan. Actually, she bought two tickets.

"On December 2012, I booked a hard seat from the booking office of the school. But booking the ticket ahead with the school's help couldn't guarantee I would manage to get a seat," she said.

During the Spring Festival rush, even hard seats are hard to come by. The supply of railway tickets often falls short of the demand.

"I know it's not fair to other buyers, but I had no choice but to take advantage and buy two tickets," Ding said. After getting two tickets with seats, she returned one.

An employee at the train station said many students line up to return their extra train tickets.

Ding arrived home at 14th of last month - one week after taking the graduate school exam.

Although she was not satisfied with her performance at several job interviews, she decided to wait until after the festival to continue her search.

Background

After Spring Festival, millions of new people will join the workforce. Half of them will be university and college graduates.

According to figures published by the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security last month, about 12.3 million new jobs were created in China last year. The urban registered unemployment rate held steady at 4.1 percent.

The Chinese government aimed to create 9 million new jobs in 2012 and fulfilled the target four months in advance, creating 12.7 million new jobs in urban areas in 2012, the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security said at a conference press.

Office workers

The capital's floating population heads home

By Liu Xiaochen

Beijing's office workers, most of whom have a strong educational background and mentally draining jobs, are stressing about how they can make it home before the eve of Spring Festival.

As a major part of the capital's floating population, these men and women face great pressure in spite of their better work environments.



A young couple kisses goodbye at the train station.

CFP Photo

Song Lu, 26, has lived in Beijing for more than six years.

After graduating from college in 2010, he went to work for ZTE Corporation as a support technician at their Mudanyuan office in Haidian District.

He already has a high-speed rail ticket back to his hometown in Jingzhou, Hubei Province thanks to his computer experience.

"It is getting easier to buy tickets because there are more trains and you can book your tickets online. I usually check the ticket information at night," Song said.

"A lot of people are buying their tickets 20 days in advance. I wait until everyone else has finished, choosing something away from the peak time like 11 pm, and choose a smaller station as my end point because there are less people heading there, meaning there will be more tickets," Song said.

There's no reason to be in a hurry, Song said, because many tickets will be returned.

"You just need to consider your situation. If I cannot buy a ticket, I can always fly back," he said.

Song shares an apartment with one of his coworkers. He starts work at 8 am and some-

times finishes at 6 pm. Occasionally he works weekends.

"Generally speaking, the amount of work I'm given is manageable. Even busy times make me feel better," he said.

"I see three reasons to stay in Beijing: it's a big city, there's more opportunities and more beautiful girls."

Song frequently updates his resume because he plans to hop jobs to a new section or position.

"My current job isn't that interesting and doesn't pay much. I think my salary (7,000 - 8,000 yuan) is too little. I save, but I never feel it's enough," he said.

Like most people who work in Beijing, he stresses over the costs of settling here.

"Buying a house and a car in Beijing is stressful. If I can't find these within two years, then I don't think I can stay here. Finding a way to become a registered resident is another problem," Song said.

He's currently toying with the idea of moving to Europe or New Zealand, or finding a job in another boom city such as Chongqing or Shenzhen.

"I feel lonely, but I care about my future more," he said.

Chen Ziwei, a 25 year-old woman from Chongqing, has been married for two years.

After her wedding, she studied abroad and returned to Beijing in October 2012.

She already has air tickets for herself and her husband: she will be spending the festival with her husband's family in Hainan Province for the first time.

"We decided to alternate each year, spending Spring Festival with his family and then with my family. If we can't see one of them for Spring Festival, then we'll visit them during the National Day holiday," Chen said.

Chen is working at a consultancy. She and her husband plan to stay in Beijing no more than three years before settling in Chongqing.

"My husband is having a hard time with changing his job. But there are a lot of big companies here, and I want to build work experience," Chen said.

Although Chen's job doesn't present her with much pressure, she doesn't think her life in Beijing is that good.

"Even if we have a house and a car, nothing will be smooth because of the bad traffic. And we have to worry about traveling every Spring Festival," she said.

"Family is the most important thing to me, and that's why I want to move to Chongqing."

Background

According to an official survey in 2001, there were more than 100,000 graduates working in Haidian District who do not have permanent residence in Beijing.

Some graduated from local universities and stayed in the city to work; others came to the capital to find work after graduating elsewhere.

Two years ago, The Beijing News and Education Channel of Sina.com interviewed 3,000 netizens to learn more about the lives of the capital's population of educated floaters.

The report found that 80 percent have considered returning home or moving to another city; housing costs are driving away more than half of them. Many others reported suffering from loneliness.

Given a better opportunity in a second- or third-tier city, more than 60 percent said they would leave Beijing. If that opportunity was in their hometown, 80 percent said they would choose to leave.

To survive the fierce competition, the capital's floaters must constantly improve their job skills, learn to fit in with the Beijing community, cope with stress and set clear goals for themselves.

Migrants

The struggle to go home

By Bao Chengrong

Although Spring Festival transportation has improved during the last decade, it continues to be a struggle for more than 250 million migrant workers.

To avoid the travel peak, many migrants are choosing to postpone their homecoming.

To those who want to go back but don't know how to buy a ticket online can only try their luck at the train station.

Getting a train ticket home is a struggle for migrant workers.

CFP Photo



Jia Huifeng, 52, was lucky to get a ticket on the day they went on sale.

A few days ago, she asked a friend to help her book a return ticket online in case the tickets would be all sold out.

Jia left her home in Shanxi Province five years ago. She said ticket sales opened only five days ahead of departure in 2008, and she had to wait in an S-shaped line to buy a ticket.

After a day's wait, she had a ticket – but not a seat.

"When I was told there were only standing tickets, I didn't have time to hesitate. I might have missed the last ticket," Jia said.

She still remembered she took a small stool to sit in the crowded train, where she could hardly move.

In 2011, she decided to take an express train to arrive at Taiyuan, the capital of Shanxi Province, and then change to a cheaper train. But at the transfer station, she found all the tickets she wanted were sold out and she nearly missed the last bus ticket to her home.

Jia said she was satisfied with her current life in Beijing as a domestic worker. She has vacations like the family she works for, earns 2,700 yuan per month and is given free room and board.

The conditions were difficult when she first arrived: she had to care for an 85-year-old woman for six months without getting a day off. She was paid 800 yuan per month.

In 2009, the housekeeping company she belonged to closed. Jia found another company through a personnel ad, and was placed with her current family.

Unlike Jia, 32-year-old Nian

Dongmei is one of the few choosing to stay behind during the festival.

"Spring Festival is not important to me. I can go back at other times when I miss home," she said.

Nian wedged herself onto a crowded train once before deciding to never do it again. Since that experience, she only visits home in June and July.

She arrived in Beijing seven years ago with two older women. In her hometown, Min County, Gansu Province, few women go out to work alone. However, the situation is totally different in her husband's hometown of Tuanjie Village. A great number of women from the village rushed to Beijing to do domestic works, including girls as young as 15.

Although Nian initially had no clue what domestic work involved, she learned quickly and gained recognition from her clients.

But she was never satisfied to work for one family for many years, and often challenged herself to experience more.

"My first goal in working is to earn more money. As time passed, I realized it was important to learn from my work. The competition among domestic workers is serious in Beijing," Nian said.

She changed employers twice during the last year, including replacing someone to work for a German and Indonesian family for 10 days. She learned a little English from free weekend training sessions provided by her company.

"Compared to my Chinese clients, the foreigners show me a lot more respect. They care about the results

but don't point fingers in the process. Their children treat me like part of the family," she said.

Although Nian's job involved taking care of children, she has little time to spend with her own. When she wants to see her sons, she has to quit.

"The distance has made us strangers. I miss them a lot, but I have no other choice," she said.

However, most domestic workers would rather give up their earnings to go home during the Spring Festival, which leaves housekeeping and nanny services short on help.

Beijing's housekeeping market recently added 6,000 workers to offset the demand.

Six companies united to share babysitters, and some housekeeping companies tried to retain more domestic workers by distributing high bonuses or importing staff from nearby areas.

Xiao Mingzheng, a member of the National Committee of the CPPCC, said 1 in 16 families in Beijing can hire a domestic worker. It is estimated that the gap between supply and demand for domestic workers is around 200,000.

Xiao also said job discrimination is another serious problem, and that many domestic workers are treated as servants.

Apart from discrimination, not being paid on time is another source of pain for China's migrants.

The capital's labor supervisor investigated and prosecuted 5,005 cases of unpaid wages, helping 41,449 migrant workers recover more than 260 million yuan.

Those who have not yet been paid took to the streets to demonstrate in several cities. But many have given up chasing their wages when faced with the lengthy legal process.

Background

Migrant workers first appeared during the 1970s.

In 1984, the government decided to open coastal port cities to promote industrial development through trade. A great number of villagers started to rush to those cities, and the term "migrant worker" was coined.

The main goal for these first generation migrants was to earn more money.

Many of the first generation migrants returned to their hometowns during the last few years. Meanwhile, a second generation has risen up to become the bulk of the group.

According to the 2012 floating population development report, as many as half of the 23 million floating people in China are migrant workers born in the 1980s.

An investigative report in 2009 found the young generation accounted for more than 58 percent of all migrant workers. Unlike their parents, migrants born in the 1980s and 1990s have little interest in returning to their hometowns and are keen to adapt to life in the big city.

Apart from earning money, the young generation also expects to learn specific skills and improve their livelihood. They consider what skills they can learn when choosing jobs.

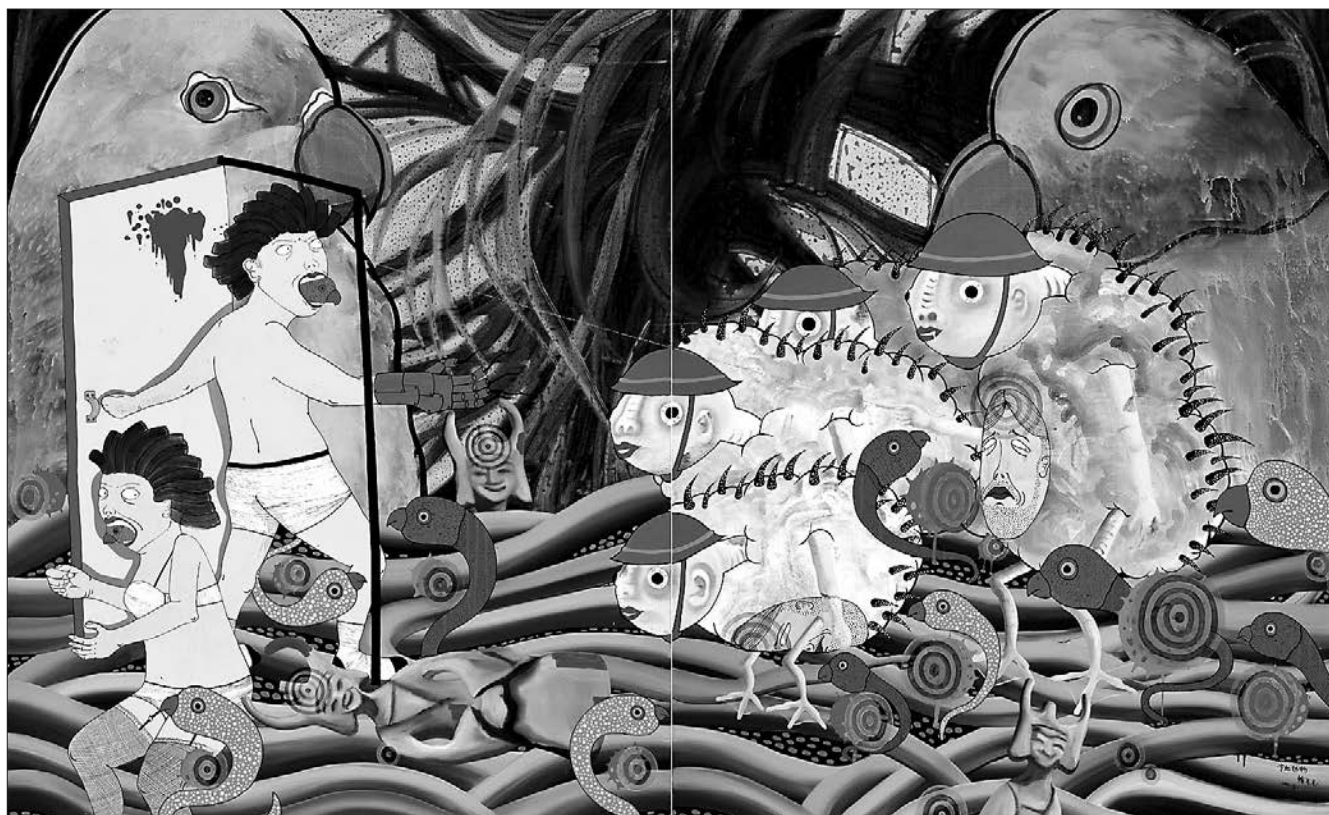


Jia Huifeng



Nian Dongmei

Eccentric but pure



Cold-blooded Animal, 170×280cm, acrylic on canvas

By Celine Lin

With her short hair and mild-mannered attire, 34-year-old Xu Maomao is the image of the introverted painter.

Rather than chasing dreams of success or developing a popular style, Xu paints to find inner peace.

Her current work is the result of three periods of transformation from 2005 till now, each of which resulted in her art becoming brighter, more dynamic and complicated.

In the Beginning, her solo exhibition, opened January 19 at Star Gallery in 798 Art Zone.

The 10 paintings on display exhibit many of her constant motifs, such as strawberries, round dots, zebras, cells, frogs and tubes.

These elements always appear in her paintings in weird combinations. Asked why, Xu explains she just includes the

most common things in her life without any specific reason.

"Honestly speaking, I don't really have some particular thoughts before starting to paint. And I don't have sketches, either," she said. "You can say that my sensations and instinct are in control when I paint."

Xu was born in the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region and graduated from the Xi'an Academy of Fine Art. She has lived and worked in Beijing since 2005.

The solo exhibition, her third at Star Gallery, will continue through the end of the month.

Subconscious motive

Inspired by Brazilian author Paulo Coelho's *The Zahir*, Xu's paintings feature a nude figure grasping a giant strawberry, carrying a roe deer on its back and confronting a blue dog.

The figure faces twisting tubes radiating rainbow-like beams.

"About five years ago, my friend asked me to read this book," she said. "The story is a Mongolian myth about how a dog – with its predatory instincts – should have eaten the female roe deer. But before he can, God makes them fall in love."

After reading the book for the second time last year, Xu had an unusual dream in which a gigantic grayish-blue monster was trying to grab a female's head. She found her dream was very similar to the central plot of Coelho's book.

"Sometimes the process of memorization is unpredictable and uncanny," she said.

Even after finishing all her



Xu Maomao

works, Xu remained unsure why she always combines such eerie elements.

Xu doesn't endow her works with any personally fixed interpretations because she is not sure about what each pattern in her paintings really represents.

"The tube-like things might be pathways, breath or bridges. The only thing I know they are not is tubes."

Xu tends to use pure colors, but her seemingly childlike expression is both elusive and indirect.

Another of her paintings, "The Story of the Herbarium" presents several figures, also nude and sexless, being gripped by tentacles. While many viewers have told her the painting appears sexual, she insists it wasn't created as an erotic work.

Emblems

Xu's professional career can be divided into three periods. She even gives each a title to embody her status: "Roughness – Unknown (2005-2008)," "Search – Repression (2008-2010)" and "Release – Fight (2010-2012)."

But in each period, the same objects appear in her paintings. The reason for these repetitive patterns is surprisingly simple: "I paint a lot of strawberries because I like to eat them, and the round dots are my favorite pattern."

"As for the zebras, the stripes on their bodies may save their life. Yet, if they migrate to another place, the stripes may make them the most conspicuous creatures and lead to their death," she said. "Zebras could be one of the most vulnerable species under certain circumstances, and that reminds me of how people struggle to survive in the concrete jungle."

Xu's eccentricity comes through in many aspects. Although her paintings are extraordinarily colorful, her favorite "colors" are black and white.

Asked why, she shrugged.

"I read a book about Enneagrams and found I belong to the fourth type: the Individualist," Xu said. "It said that people in the fourth type tend to spend a lot of time in a trance-like state. I do, and it helps me calm down."

Xu said her current state is outside the three periods mentioned before.

"I'm currently waiting to see what will come after my third solo show."



Song of Youth: Horn, 150×130cm, acrylic on canvas

Gifts for Valentine's Day

By Annie Wei

Trying to find something to get your man or woman for the Valentine's Day?

Beijing Today knows a few places with gifts guaranteed to make your sweetheart melt.



Spring prints for 2013



Skincare products are a must-buy this holiday season.

Trendy clothes for her

Spring is just around the corner, and it's time to start building a wardrobe for the season.

You can find print patterned suits from Agnes B, whose prints are more bold and colorful than they were in 2012. There's also the sporty and casual look from DKNY, stripes from Tommy Hilfiger and Marc Jacobs and checkered prints from Lacoste.

White is the new popular color after several years of candy colors like bright yellow, pink and blue, which were widely used by such brands as Chloe and Valentino.

Check the new arrivals at high-end department stores like Shinkong Plaza or Guomao Shopping Malls.

Shinkong Plaza

Where: 87 Jianguo Lu, Chaoyang District

Open: 10 am – 10 pm

Tel: 6530 5888

Guomao Shopping Mall

Where: 1 Jianguomen Wai Dajie, Chaoyang District

Open: 10 am – 10 pm

Tel: 6505 2288

Quality designs for him

There are few places where e-commerce is as convenient as in Beijing, and there are more great vendors every day.

The recently opened Iliangcang.com offers clean designs, professional photos and unique products from brands both domestic and foreign.

You can find expensive items such as a Bell motorbike helmet for 3,008 yuan, ideal for the young boyfriend who loves fast sports like motorcycling, and less expensive things like a handmade felt cat bed, priced 788 yuan.

Also buy-worthy are the Aesop skincare package for 1,300 yuan and cozy pillow case for 20 yuan.

Site: iliangcang.com



Motorbike helmet



Kitchenware

Umbrellas for gentlemen

Gifts for your boyfriend or girlfriend's parents are even tougher to pick out. Most are not the sort to "need" anything, so the trick is to buy something practical but well-made.

For example, Alexander McQueen's umbrella (4,500 yuan) is a great choice for your sweetheart's dad. It is well made and guaranteed to keep you dry during the spring and summer rains.

For the mom, there is nothing better than quality kitchenware by WMF.

Alexander McQueen

Where: Floor 1, The Village North, 19 Sanlitun Bei Lu, Chaoyang District

Open: 10 am – 9 pm

Tel: 6417 7110

Cuccina

Where: Opposite the north gate of Worker's Stadium, Floor 1, 17 Gongti Bei Lu, Chaoyang District

Open: 10 am – 9 pm

Tel: 6417 9669



Alexander McQueen's umbrella, 4,500 yuan CFP Photos

Food and drinks for the holidays

By Annie Wei

Tomorrow is Chinese New Year, and the city is half empty. For food, unless you are making reservations on New Year's Eve or Valentine's Day, the dining vibe is milder than usual. This week, *Beijing Today* recommends places that offer a romantic dinner and wines to buy and drink at home.

Valentine's menu at Aria

As one of the most popular venues for fine dining, Aria is presenting a six-course set menu for the year's most romantic day.

Enjoy a glass of Taittinger Rose champagne on arrival at your candle-lit table for two. Starters include soft fried quail eggs and truffle cream.

The dinner continues with whipped chestnuts, consomme, rock chive and romaine root; followed by lobster, peach granite, Sher wagyu made with garlic, pinot glaze, spinach and horseradish milk; or you can choose roasted black cod.

The dessert is couverture ganache made with Turkish cookie crumbs, dried strawberry mousse and macaroons.

Dinner costs 1,500 yuan per couple, with a 15 percent gratuity fee.

Aria

Where: Floor 1, China World Hotel, 1 Jianguomen Wai Dajie, Chaoyang District
Open: Feb 14, dinner only
Tel: 6505 2266 ext 37



Valentine's Day dinner at Aria



New Year's Eve dinner at China World Hotel
Photos provided by China World Hotel



Lobster



Dessert set menu

Photos provided by Capital M

Capital M's romantic dinner from emperor's view

If you love her, treat her like a queen – or at least an empress. Dinner in a courtyard restaurant is always an impressive gesture.

Capital M is located on Qianmen Avenue and has a great view of the ancient city wall and towers.

The restaurant offers a four-course Valentine's menu with roaring fireplaces.

The starter is a clear broth with pigeon tortellini and porcini mushrooms. For a main course, pick a classic best beef fillet cooked the way you want and topped with French foie gras, black truffles and ending with passion fruit Pavlova.

It costs 588 yuan per person and 888 yuan with wine.

Capital M

Where: 3F, 2 Qianmen Dajie, Xuanwu District
Open: February 14 for dinner only
Tel: 6702 2727

Recommended Chinese wines

We invited Jim Boyce, the night-life blogger behind beijingboyce.com and grapewineofchina.com, to recommend five Chinese wines worth of trying this holiday.

Helan Mountain Dry Red 2008

This entry-level wine from Ningxia still holds up well after several years and is an excellent value. You can pick it up at Jenny Lou's in Central Park and on Xindong Road.

Price: 29.8 yuan

Grace Vineyard Chardonnay and Cabernet-Merlot 2010/2011

These Shanxi province wines rank among the better entry-level bottles made in China. Get them at Everwines on Xindong Road or from everwines.com. There are more than a dozen options from Grace, up to the Chairman's Reserve priced 488 yuan.

Price: starting from 72 yuan

1421 Admiral's Reserve Chardonnay

Made in Xinjiang and packaged in Shandong, the wines from 1421 – including its lean Chardonnays – are popping up in the city's restaurants. You

can buy this one at Metro.

Price: 120 yuan

Silver Heights Family Reserve 2010

Made by a family-owned winery in Ningxia, among China's best, this wine blends three Cabernets: Sauvignon, Gernischt and Franc. As with Grace Vineyard, Silver Heights is available from Everwines.

Price: 291 yuan

Helan Qing Xue JiaBeiLan 2009

This wine's claim to fame is winning an international trophy at *Decanter* magazine's World Wine Awards. It doesn't come cheap, but it is among the country's best and has great story. It is available from The Wine Republic at thewinerepublic.com.

Price: 898 yuan

The above wines are available in many retail outlets such as B.H.G, Pudao and Jenny Lou's.



Photos by Jim Boyce